

# Freethinker

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## MONKEY BUSINESS

PROGRESS towards secularisation has been made in, of all places, the State of Arkansas in the United States. This is not so surprising as it might seem, when the fantastic antiquity of the system, which has only just been done away with, is appreciated. The 'monkey law' was made famous by Spencer Tracy and the film *Inherit the Wind*, which centred round the celebrated trial in Dayton, Tennessee in which Clarence Darrow tore fundamentalist principals, in the person of William Jennings Bryan to shreds although he lost the case. Under the 'monkey law' it is forbidden in state schools to teach the theory that "mankind ascended or descended from a lower order of animals". This meant that the Darwinian theory of evolution could not be taught.

Incredible as it may seem, this law was still on the statute books in Arkansas last week, and is even now upheld in Mississippi. However, a suit was brought by a biology teacher from Little Rock, Arkansas, and she was joined by a Mr H. H. Blanchard, the secretary of the Arkansas Education Association. They were overruled by the Arkansas Supreme Court, who upheld the statute. It is hard to believe that a body, who must be considered to be the wise men of a state in the United States, itself sometimes considered to be the most civilised country in the world, could strive to perpetuate a lie, to defeat what must be the underlying purpose of education, namely to impart knowledge and understanding. That men with such fixed ideas, and it would seem such an irrational desire to dictate what is right, have the power to make judgement over anyone or anything is both sad and insufferable.

However, an appeal was made to the Supreme Court of the United States. The State of Arkansas argued that it alone was responsible for the curriculum of its public (state) schools. Justice Abe Fortas for the supreme court seems to have realised the dangers of permitting the State of Arkansas to behave as it pleases, and while he had to concede that they were responsible for the curriculum of their schools, he cited the first and fourteenth amendments to the constitution and said that their rights over their schools could not conflict with those amendments. The first amendment guarantees freedom of religion, while the fourteenth makes this guarantee binding on the states. During the hearing Justice Fortas said the "laws effort was confined to an attempt to blot out a particular theory because of its supposed conflict with the biblical account, literally read", and "It is clear that the fundamentalist sectarian conviction was and is the law's reason for existence". This is further confirmation of the prejudice which sits on the benches in the courts of Arkansas.

This ruling will undoubtedly affect the state of Mississippi. One would presume that however prejudiced and irrational the authorities there are, they will take the hint. If they do not it will only require one individual to bring a suit and justice will be done.

So progress is made in America, and no doubt most people in Britain will be briefly amazed that such a state of affairs has been allowed to continue so long, and reflect how lucky they are to be British.

And few will argue that relatively speaking we are not lucky. Nevertheless, the complacency of this attitude, that as long as we are shocked or surprised occasionally at what goes on elsewhere all must be well in our own camp, is depressing indeed. Darwinism is taught in our schools, but only half the battle in Arkansas was to permit the teaching of Darwinism. The other half was to restrain the



idiocy of fundamentalism, for, of course, Darwin refutes fundamentalism. Why then if the majority of Britons are eager for their children to be taught Darwinism in their teens, do they sit back and allow those children to be taught the book of Genesis as though it were truth when they first go to school. Is it because they feel the story of Adam and Eve is a nice story for children and provides an adequate explanation until they are able to understand the truth? I would point out that children are very intent on detail. They like stories that make sense. Personally I know of a little boy who at the age of four was found avidly discussing with the girl next-door how it was that Cain killed Abel and went off and married in another land, when with Abel's demise he and his parents were supposed

(Continued on next page)



# Freethinker

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Editor: David Reynolds

(Continued from front page)

to be the only humans on earth. His father put him on the right track by telling him a bed-time story all about apes and cavemen, dinosaurs and glaciers—much more exciting, and even to an infant mind much more probable.

It is thus imperative that we destroy this complacency, partly born of the superior iniquities of the Americans and others, and make people realise that our own house is far from in order—and will never be in order until we begin to tell our children the truth.

## TOWARDS HUMAN RIGHTS

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Annual report of the  
National Secular Society

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

National Secular Society. Details of membership and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, SE1. Telephone 01-407 2717. Cheques, etc., should be made payable to the NSS.

Humanist Letter Network (International) and Humanist Postal Book Service (secondhand books bought and sold). For information or catalogue send 6d stamp to Kit Mouat, Mercers, Cuckfield, Sussex.

### OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN and McRAE.

Manchester Branch NSS, Platt Fields, Sunday afternoon, 3 p.m.: Car Park, Victoria Street, Sunday evenings, 8 p.m.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead)—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

### INDOORS

Aberdeen Humanist Group: The Saltire Room, Provost Ross's House, Shiprow, Aberdeen: Friday, November 29, 7.30 p.m.: "Humanism and The Child", Mrs R. ILLSLEY.

The Conservation Society, Caxton Hall, Caxton Street, London, SW1: Saturday, November 23, 11.30 a.m.—6 p.m.: Annual General Meeting. At 2.30 p.m. Lord RICHIE-CALDER will give the Presidential Address "Hell upon Earth".

Enfield and Barnet Humanist Group: 13 Warwick Road, New Barnet: Monday, November 25, 8.15 p.m.: "Why Demonstrate?", Dr GEOFF RICHMAN, Secretary of Socialist Medical Association, was also a member of the *ad hoc* Committee, which organised the October 27 demonstration.

Leicester Secular Society: 75 Humberstone Gate: Sunday, November 24, 6.30 p.m.: "Communists and the Trade Unions", Mr JOHN PEEK.

South Place Ethical Society: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, WC1: Sunday, November 24, 11 a.m.: "New Plays and Social Responsibility", T. F. EVANS, LL.B. Admission free. Tuesday November 26, 6.45 p.m.: Discussion, "Equality for Women", Public Meeting by BHA, NSS, and SPES. Admission 2s (including refreshments), members free.

Worthing Humanist Group: Morelands Hotel (opposite the Pier): Sunday, November 24, 5.30 p.m.: "The Population Explosion" (Talk illustrated with slides), JACK PARSONS, education officer of the Conservation Society.

## CHARLES BRADLAUGH—CENTENARY EXHIBITION

ON THE occasion of the Centenary of Charles Bradlaugh's first election contest at Northampton, Mrs Renée Short, Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton NE, was invited to perform the opening ceremony at the Central Library, Northampton, on November 9. In a speech admirably fitting for the occasion she said:

*The exhibition commemorates a remarkable man, who started at the age of twelve as an errand boy and who became a Member of Parliament, a Sunday School teacher who became a Freethinker and President of the National Secular Society from 1866 to 1890 except for the year 1872, a man who became skilled in the law, as a journalist and debater and whose great mind embraced the problems of Ireland, India, France, Spain and America besides those of his own constituency. Inevitably he was mobbed and insulted for to carry on propaganda for Freethought in England in those days meant more than hard work, it meant ferocious and riotous opposition and hatred that is hard to imagine today. He was a Republican and a Malthusian—an advocate of family planning even in those days—and the combination of all these non-conformist views guaranteed mobs, damages and demonstrations wherever he spoke. He was kept out of halls he had booked for meetings and thrown out of hotels where he hoped to spend the night afterwards. Some of his bitterest opponents who demonstrated against him at meetings were clergymen and Bradlaugh was slandered and libelled throughout his life.*

*It was his struggle to get into Parliament that showed what a lion-hearted, courageous man he was. He had always identified himself with the radical wing of the Liberal party; he was greatly influenced in his youth by Robert Owen and he once said, "I cannot but concede that Owen's movement had enormous value, if only as a protest against that terrible and inhuman competitive struggle in which the strong were rewarded for their strength and no mercy was shown to the weakest". He had much in common with the Chartists and he had very definite ideas about what he wanted to do. As early as 1859 he told some friends in Northampton that he would like to fight the seat. He stood in 1868 for the first time and his election address contained the following programme—a system of National compulsory education for all children, a change in the land laws giving greater security to the "actual cultivator of the soil for improvement made upon it", a thorough change in our extravagant system of national expenditure so that our public departments may cease to be refuges for destitute members of so-called noble families, a change in the taxation system so that those who had inherited wealth and land should bear more rather than those who actually increase the wealth of the nation by their daily labour; he wanted employer and employee to be equal before the law and he advocated conciliation courts for the settlement of trade disputes; there should be complete separation of Church from State, reform of the House of Lords, peers habitually absent from Parliament should be deprived of their privileges and the right of voting by proxy should be abolished; and he wanted an end to the system of government by aristocratic families and opportunity for the poorest to become statemen and leaders. That sounds pretty radical and pretty up-to-date.*

*He was to fight two more elections at Northampton before being returned as one of its two Members in 1880. It took him twelve years to get there and six years to establish his right to take his seat as an Atheist; the story of those six years is an incredible one of political and*

(Continued on page 373)



## IS MAN MORAL?

MAN, with that arrogance which is characteristic of him, has always claimed to be the only moral being, because he alone is conscious of the distinction between right and wrong. The behaviour of "lower" creatures is acknowledged to be purely instinctive; they do not reflect upon the merits of alternative courses of action but merely react automatically in a certain manner to a certain stimulus. The same stimulus always produces more or less the same reaction, and the sole aim of this reaction is survival—of the individual (seeking food and shelter) or of the species (seeking a mate). Man does not consider himself enslaved to these instincts in the same way. Certainly they will exist within him, he could not survive without them, but the society which he has constructed (at least in the 'civilised' world) has eliminated the need for a continual daily struggle to exist. For most of us obtaining food and shelter is no longer any serious problem, and energy previously utilised in satisfying these primeval instincts can be channelled into other directions. Unfortunately certain impulses, in particular the sex urge, far from being more easily satisfied are dangerously repressed and frustrated by the prohibitions and taboos of society. Consequently guilt and anxiety complexes almost completely unknown in any other species have become commonplace in man. This is the price he pays for 'civilisation', yet to some extent even this energy from repressed instincts can be sublimated and directed towards useful ends.

This vast reservoir of superfluous and sublimated energy has been used by man to build up a culture, a literature and an art; he has had the time to turn his attention to activities other than mere instinctual ones. He has become aware that this new-found leisure permits him for the first time a choice of actions, and it is this awareness of choice which is essential towards the formation of moral values. Morality is of necessity a social phenomenon—it cannot exist where the whole of life is devoted to the struggle for personal survival. In such a situation each individual considers right to be that which most favours his own survival, and wrong that which most threatens it. Thus it is only when that survival is assured that moral deliberations are considered.

An awareness of choice, however, is no guarantee that the choice is freely made and determined by no external influence or coercion. The determinist argues that man is as subject to the law of causation as anything else is, and seen in this light we are forced to the conclusion that the question "Is man moral?" is meaningless. One cannot maintain that the person who chooses right is acting in any more moral manner than he who chooses wrong when both choices were determined by factors over which they had no control. Nevertheless those who insist that man does possess a 'free will' emphasise that it is this ability to choose between 'good' and 'evil' which distinguishes the moral nature of man. It is of course admitted that all other animals are subject to the law of causation.

It is my own reluctantly arrived at belief that all man's actions, or rather the motivations behind his actions, are selfish and cannot be described as moral even admitting the existence of a mystical free will. Even seemingly altruistic conduct can usually be traced to some kind of self-interest, though not necessarily conscious. Acts of the greatest kindness and charity are often motivated by the desire for the esteem of our fellows. Alternatively they may be prac-

tised simply because it makes us feel good, that is because it assuages our feelings of guilt or inadequacy, providing meaning in an otherwise meaningless existence. The most altruistic behaviour is often the result of an intense sympathy for our fellow-man, a sympathy not based on love of but on identification with others. We act towards them as we would wish others to act towards us in their predicament. Thus even the source of the "Golden Rule" is self-interest. We respect the rights of others in order that they will respect ours, since the only way we can be secure as members of society is to ensure the safety of *all* within society. There are of course many examples of heroic self-sacrifice which cannot be attributed to mere self-interest, for example the mother who gives up her life to protect her child. Yet this is an instance of that purely instinctive behaviour which is common throughout the animal world, and cannot therefore be claimed as an example of that morality which is supposed to distinguish man from other animals.

The history of mankind should be studied in an objective manner, not from the standpoint of that particularly common brand of Humanism which, having forced God to take refuge in non-existence, seeks to worship man in his stead. We are often regaled with tales of the nobility of man, yet that nobility is seldom witnessed. Man is dominant, he is 'superior', not because of his moral nature but because he is the most ruthless and murderous animal on earth. Other animals may kill, as the insanely sadistic plan of nature dictates they must, but they do so only insofar as is necessary for their own survival. Man kills for food he does not need, for the vanity of dressing up in skins and furs he could do without, or for the simple pleasure that killing itself gives him (we call it "sport"). He is the only animal that continually wages war on his own kind, wasting vast wealth and resources urgently needed to combat already-existing poverty and starvation in the creation of millions more poor and hungry (and dead). Not content with the punishment he extracts in this life he conjures up the most sadistic visions of eternal torment in the next for his enemies.

### PUBLIC MEETING

## EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, LONDON

Tuesday, November 26, 1968, 7.30 p.m.

BARONESS STOCKS

JOYCE BUTLER, MP

SADIE PATTERSON

National Woman's Officer, Transport & General Workers Union

Chair:

LENA JEGER, MP

Organisers:

British Humanist Association, 13 Prince of Wales Terrace,  
London, W8. 01-937 2341

National Secular Society, 103 Borough High Street, London,  
SE1. 01-407 2717

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,  
London, WC1. 01-242 8032



## THE QUALITIES OF MATURITY

ANN ROEST

WHILE it must be agreed that a mature person or one named 'mature' will vary according to age and circumstances, nevertheless it should be possible to ascertain in a general way what the world means when it names an individual as 'mature'. It should also perhaps be agreed that any attempt at definition will be governed by emotional and rational opinion. The *Oxford Concise Dictionary* is totally unsatisfactory in its definition.

A mature person has tolerance and is a person who has learnt enough to know how little he knows, not just to say so and pretend he knows, but really to know. This knowledge is a gentleness of understanding of others. The desire to laugh at, to dislike, to criticise others, disappears. Instead we find such a person will excuse the small irritations in other people. Will seek to find excuses to explain some fault in another. Will express delight in the achievements of others and their triumphs and gains. Such a person grows beyond jealousy and self interest.

A mature person has accepted his environment, his position, his circumstances, and his own personality. Has learnt to understand these things to some extent and to try to overcome what he knows of these things to be weak and poor. He no longer blames any external reason for these things but realises that if they are not satisfactory the only person who is able to do anything about them is himself. If he can alter these things without hurt to others, then he will do so.

A mature person, understanding all this will have realised also that he is all alone in the world. He cannot climb into the boat of another person and expect to be carried along with them. The understanding of the difference between 'aleness' and 'loneliness' is barely managed by many. They are two quite different states and once understood and accepted, make life much easier. The 'aleness' of all human beings, since we cannot inhabit each others minds, brings attendant sorrows and joys. Also it brings a sense of inferiority with a sense, side by side, of superiority. A knowledge of one's own limitations walks with a knowledge of one's powers of unlimited hope.

I has appeared to me that few persons are able to manage to be alone, happily. On a beach at the seaside one couple arrives and sets camp. Another couple arrives and will often set camp within a few feet of the first couple, without regard to the fact that the beach is void. Human beings are gregarious. Those people who can be happy with their own company and yet welcome the company of others are most fortunate and may perhaps be considered, in this respect, more mature than their fellows. Even a husband and wife may not share the same boat. The two people, however 'close' they may appear to be to themselves and to others, cannot ever hope to share a boat and remain at the same time, happy individuals, able to contribute to each other and to the family.

A mature person shows several qualities which may be closely linked. The ability to make and take decisions and the determination to attack and to try to overcome difficulties might be considered as two essential qualities. Reliability of word or trustworthiness can be surely found in one we would consider mature. If a man says he will meet you at a place specified and at a time specified, he will surely do so if it is physically possible. Such a person

has no need to 'promise'. His statement of intent is sufficient. This also implies reliability of thought and deed. By this I mean our mature person is that good, old fashioned type, honest, and sincere. What he says he will do, he does.

Laughter is a way of expressing many things. Joy, amusement, strong emotion, and just good, plain appreciation of a joke. No mature person could retain his title if he cannot laugh. Lucky indeed the person who can make light of sorrow. But those who do may be considered unfeeling. This need not necessarily be true for some people can mitigate their sorrows and troubles, see them in perspective along parallel lines, and in so seeing them, learn to regard them less seriously.

Lastly, a mature person must know, really know, how to love. He must be able to like others quite unselfconsciously and naturally, without deliberation. He must give without consciously giving. He must be able to receive without wanting to repay. In his loving and liking, he must be aware of his limitations and feel no guilt at them. He can but do his best and be content. He should feel some responsibility to the rest of the world and want to 'put back into the pot' for the joy and privileges he has received from it. This may lead him into politics, social work or some other form of service to others. But whatever way it leads him, he will be impelled for others and not for himself.

All the discussion so far has dealt with qualities of the mind. Maturity, as it is generally discussed, usually does apply to such qualities. Physical maturity is far easier to discuss and define. It depends so much on health and age and is not so interesting. I do not think any real maturity of mind can be successfully achieved before the age of thirty nor do I think it can be achieved without having experienced personal trouble. Trouble overcome is very maturing. The young amongst us, by the fact of their sparse years, have less experience, less testing, less time to think, deduce and strive to improve. The most mature persons are often those in their fifties if they learnt tolerance, contentment, and are unimpaired intellectually. By no means should it be supposed that these qualities suppress ambition. Ambition need not be inhibited in someone who is tolerant and contented. Indeed without imaginative ambition we should still be living in caves and throwing axes for our dinner. In a mature person ambition or creative thinking may be the stronger, the better, for being controlled. Our greatest artists are those with the greatest imagination and who have learned self-discipline, so that they know better how to manage their tools; who have learned the importance of the world around them and their own small significance; and who have learned that nothing of lasting joy and importance can be achieved without real, hard work.

All this writing and words and meaning seem, upon re-reading, to have a sort of religious flavour. Religion, of course, lays all this and more into a simplified code and makes it easier to follow. When we learn to drive a car there are two methods, either one of which will enable us to be competent drivers. Some learn from the engine outwards, understanding why everything works as it does. (Rather like opening the parcel and examining and understanding its contents.) The other sort of learner is shown which knobs to press and pull and given specific instruction



as to when and how. This method requires little thought and may produce a competent driver. The former method is harder. In life people who attack the world by starting from the engine outwards, or in other words, opening and examining and understanding the parcel, may not need religion but such a person must needs be intelligent and positive to a degree. Most people are not clever, not deep-thinkers, not intense, not creative artists (either scientific or otherwise). Most are ordinary. Many are just plain stupid, but they need to be able to drive well through life. It is difficult for them to think things out and understand properly. And so, they must be given a set of rules. They will follow these rules better if they decide to follow them because they want to—because the rules are attractively and excitingly presented. They will follow them too if they

are offered a reward for their efforts. They do not like being forced, coerced and disciplined externally.

Religion provides the set of attractive, easy to follow rules. Their reward, they are told if they follow the rules properly will be life everlasting.

Since perhaps the greatest fear of all men's fears, is the fear of death, what better and more exciting reward can be offered than to be told that one will never die? However, it is not fair and not sensible for those who are clever and intellectual to sneer at this unless they can offer a better solution or a better incentive to keep their fellows in line. The average man cannot manage alone since he does not know and never will, how to live a full life unless he is helped. Humanists must provide that help.

## WHAT LINE HUMANISM?

Laura Campbell

IT has struck me for some time that the fact that there is a tendency to assume the humanist line in any particular controversy is obvious. It often may be: but such an assumption should never be superficially accepted. A conscientious humanist must see that comprehensive and responsible research is always considered before decisions are made and keep his mind open to the possible humanist aspects on both sides of opposing viewpoints. The concept that all the good can ever be on one side and all the bad on the other is a characteristic feature of the most primitive manifestations of religion. And the fallacy of it is just exactly why truly adult decisions are so difficult, and often involve compromise. The more idealistic a person is the more his conscience may stick at some such compromise. But the fanaticism of the saint may lead as easily to disaster as the fanaticism of the sinner—or, I would rather say, of the philanthrope and the misanthrope. Yet the compromises made in modern history by Neville Chamberlain, Roosevelt, the lesser Kadars and others may be hardly less despised. Again one has to guard against the religious glorification of martyrdom. (Is there a link between religious mania and suicide?—exemplified at this moment by Biafra and its attributed genocide.)

An example of this dichotomy. The defender of individual liberty (and humanists are such) will say: Drugs are no worse than alcohol: so drugs should be allowed on the same terms of sale as alcohol. Agreed. The philanthropist (and humanists are such) will say: Drugs are as potentially damaging to human health and happiness as alcohol: so let us not encourage their use. Agreed.

To my mind the true humanist would not be side-tracked by either of these viewpoints. He would go straight to a demand for professional study of the human cravings for comfort, confidence, success and highlights (the search for oblivion, escape is secondary only resulting from the lack of these others). He would then try to discover why many persons, whether isolationist or convivial, are deprived or diverted from finding fulfilment of these universal desires in happier healthier ways. Only subsequent to such research can there be any hope of sound social and legislative policies. And this goes for a lot of other subjects too.

Difficulty in evaluating two opposing courses of action, despite unity of motive, was never more clearly before all thinking people than in the present dilemma of whether it is better to close or to keep open cultural and other contacts between ourselves and those countries which have aggressed against Czechoslovakia. The instinctive answer, based on the conscientiousness of feeling, is very likely a

negative one. Yet when I was in Cape Town at the time of the University protests against the application of apartheid, my friends there thought that our applying economic sanctions would most hurt the Africans themselves. And when I was teaching in Germany after the war, the Germans I met who had seen the evil of Nazi-ism were those who, like the hairdresser who had been a ship's barber, had jobs which took them abroad, and could say, "I was able to see it from the outside, to read newspapers abroad: I used to come back and say to my wife 'This is all wrong . . .'".

In the present case I cannot propose an answer. I can only suggest that the most operative human considerations are probably not to be found in the financial sphere. But it is a matter that *must* be decided, cannot be left 'pending'. Will a group of eminent humanists, with really significant experience inside the countries concerned, form a commission to provide guidance for a public well equipped to feel on the subject, but less equipped to judge which might prove the more relevant humanitarian line?

(Continued from page 370)

*personal spleen, of hatred and fear of the man and all he stood for and of utter incompetence on the part of the Speaker of the day! Bradlaugh asked to be allowed to affirm his allegiance on taking his seat but this was refused. A select committee of the House refused him either to affirm or take the oath. He made several splendid speeches from the Bar of the House, he was taken into custody, he was thrown out of the House by ten policemen and four attendants, his seat was declared vacant no less than four times between 1880 and 1886 and each time Bradlaugh was returned by the people of Northampton and each time, the same ritual was gone through again when he sought to take his seat. After the 1886 election, there was a new Speaker in the House and he allowed Bradlaugh to take the oath and did not permit any interference at that stage. This is a disgraceful part of Parliamentary history and a great man exhausted his strength during his last years in the fight for his rights. He died in 1891 and never knew that as he lay dying, Parliament repented and the House of Commons passed a resolution expunging from the records of the House all those resolutions excluding him in former years. It is fitting that as the people of Northampton stood by their Member during those dreadful years they should honour him today, one hundred years after his first attempt to get into Parliament.*



## SEX AND SINNERS

G. L. SIMONS

THE Roman Catholic Church is a tyrannical, superstitious and brutal machine. Its only concern is the preservation of its power and authority, its privilege and influence. To this end it will come to terms with any regime—however cruel and oppressive, however corrupt and insensitive—that will tolerate it. The continuing impact of the Roman Church, one of a number of crosses that suffering mankind is forced to bear, is disastrous for several reasons. One of the most important of these is the Church's attitude to sexual morality; and this attitude embraces, in addition to contraception (which is getting all the publicity), homosexuality, abortion, sterilisation, artificial insemination, divorce, adultery, pre-marital sexual relations, etc., etc.—in fact the Church's preoccupation with sex and its harsh attitude to every aspect amount to sickness and obsession. It is important to realise that the Church's arrogant presumption in sexual matters is not new. Rome is running true to form: it is sick and callous today, and it was always so.

In some Church penitentials, fornication was considered a greater sin than murder. In the penitentials of Theodore and Bede simple fornication earned one year's penance; *thinking* of fornication earned a forty-day penance. In the five comparatively short medieval penitential codes, twenty-five paragraphs deal with masturbation on the part of the laity and other paragraphs on the part of the clergy.

In the Middle Ages the Church attempted to regulate the way in which the sexual act was performed between married couples. Only one position was permitted, and penalties were prescribed for using variants. The position *more canino*, in which the man approaches the woman from behind, called for seven years' penance. The married couples were expected to explain to the priest in the confessional exactly how they had intercourse, whereupon he could judge its propriety.

In addition the Church tried to regulate the frequency of sexual intercourse amongst married couples. First, according to Canon Law, intercourse was made illegal on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Then it was made illegal for forty days before Easter and forty days before Christmas, and for three days before attending communion. It was also banned from the time of conception to forty days after parturition, and during any penance. (For more material of this sort see G. Rattray Taylor's *Sex in History*.)

Cardinal Gibbons suggested in *Faith of our Fathers* that Jesus chose his closest disciples on the basis of their virginity, and that in heaven he chose a special band of 140,000 virgin angels. This preoccupation with virginity still results in elevating the "purity" of the celibate nun and priest above the "carnality" of the married couple.

The medieval attitude to masturbation also has its modern corollary. According to a Decree of the Holy Office (2/8/29) if a Catholic doctor is required to test the potency of a Catholic husband, the doctor may only obtain sperm from the wife's vagina after husband and wife have had intercourse. If the husband obtains a sample of sperm by any other means, both he and the doctor are guilty of mortal sin.

And serious attempts to understand human sexuality are equally deplorable. In 1948 the National Council of Catholic Women (USA) condemned the Kinsey report as "an insult to the American people". Similarly in a pamph-

let *Sex Instruction in the Home*, issued by the Catholic Truth Society in 1963, the Rev. Pickering says, "You would be appalled to see the anatomy charts of the sexual organs and the growth of the unborn child published for use in schools with boys and girls of twelve and thirteen", and he adds, "The problem is not chiefly one of giving information but of training the will". His own recommendations are curious:

"... we take no examples from plants or animals. There does not seem need for any of this, and it is only making your task more difficult. Instead we take our examples from the feasts and prayers of the Church, and keep the whole thing as simple and spiritual as possible."

What on earth goes on at these feasts to make them suitable for sex instruction?

The bizarre attitudes extend into medicine: priests expect to lay down the ethical law for doctors. If, for example, a fertilised egg implants itself in the Fallopian tubes by mistake—and there are many such cases on record—to allow the "pregnancy" to continue may mean that the mother's chance of survival was less than one in three. And yet even here, until very recently, Catholic dogma would not permit clinical action before the tubes had burst. In such cases the baby could not come to term and was allowed to threaten the life of the mother in the attempt. How many sickening and avoidable tragedies did this dogma cause in the past?

Also in connection with birth is the attitude to monstrosities. In Sister Mary Beck's *The Nurse: Handmaid of the Divine Physician* she recommends that if the baby be born with two heads "baptize one head absolutely and each of the chests conditionally. . . . If one being is distinct, the other, attached to it, indistinct, baptise the distinct being absolutely, the other conditionally". Similarly, in Father MacFadden's *Medical Ethics for Nurses* we read if a two-headed monstrosity is about to die "it is permissible to baptise them simultaneously by pouring water on the head of each . . ." and pronouncing the right words. If a foetus is likely to die before delivery it must be baptised quickly in the womb: the nurse is instructed to baptise "with a sterile bulb syringe or other irrigating instrument", reaching is as best she can. If a woman miscarries and the embryo is unrecognisable the blood clot must be baptised. Magdalen Goffin, a Roman Catholic, comments in *Objections to Roman Catholicism*:

"... priests . . . baptise embryos, foetuses, and still-born infants, cause enormous and superstitious distress to parents by refusing Christian burial to those who have escaped their attentions, and flip over theological manuals to find out if, in cases of malpresentation, baptism on the leg is sufficient to ensure eternal life."

The grotesque nature of Catholic sexual ethics, as recommended by the hierarchy and probably not as practised by the laity, is attributable to the fearsome celibacy of the early fathers of the Church, and the associated hatred of sex in all its manifestations. This hatred can easily be detected in the writings of Paul, Augustine, Aquinas, and virtually all the saints who troubled to record the thoughts of their sick and worried minds. The damnable impact of priestly celibacy on religious teaching has been criticised repeatedly and it cannot be condemned too often.

When one realises the importance of sexual fulfilment for human happiness and psychological health, the Church's vicious and heartless moralising can only be damned for the sick and dangerous nonsense that it is.



## BOOK REVIEW

G.N.D.

ISRAEL WITHOUT ZIONISTS—A Plea for Peace in the Middle East, Uri Avnery (Collier-Macmillan, London, 1968. 35s).

THE Arab-Israeli conflict constitutes the greatest danger to world peace, with the Soviet Union and the USA apparently very firmly committed to the opposing camps. Two groups of people claim the same land. The original inhabitants, the Palestine Arabs would seem to have most of the justice on their side; the newly constituted Israel clearly has the better organisation and superior force to withstand the Arab challenge. The problem seems to be insoluble and the vicious circle gets more and more vicious. Every proposed situation deserves consideration—all the more so when it comes from a member of the Israeli Parliament.

Uri Avnery was a ten-year-old boy when his German parents took him to Palestine under the Mandate. At fourteen he joined the Irgun and at fifteen and a half he broke with them because he "did not agree with its reactionary stand, its anti-socialism . . . the concept of the Chosen Few". In 1948, inevitably, he fought with the Israeli Army for the establishment of Israel as a State. And yet, he never lost his understanding of the Arab point of view and the anti-Imperialist aspirations of the Arab people. (Nasser-baiters, particularly of the Left, ought to read his account of the events after the overthrow of Farouk, of the provocative activist policy of the Zionist leaders, culminating in the "Israeli attack on the Gaza camps, killing scores of Egyptian soldiers".)

In 1950 Avnery established his weekly news magazine *Ha'olam Haze* (This World) to propagate his ideas. In 1965 he stood for Parliament (Knesset) representing his new party, the New Force. To quote him: "The New Force is non-Zionist, and its leaders have been ostracized for many years for advocating such heretical ideas as a return of the Arab refugees, co-operation with Arab

nationalism, and abolishing the Zionist organisation. . . . The New Force also advocates that Israel should cease to declare herself as a Jewish state, but rather become a pluralist one. It believes in full equality of the Israeli Arabs, in a *complete separation of synagogue and state*" (my italics). His party received 1.2 per cent of the national vote, dispersed throughout the country, but a much higher percentage from the younger generation, the Kibbutzim, the Army and the Israeli Arabs.

His solution for the conflict, envisages first of all a change in basic attitudes. Zionism born of European persecution and the Ghetto, thought of the Jews of the world as one nation, the Jewish dispersal as temporary, anti-Semitic persecution as a continuing and inevitable phenomenon, the in-gathering of the exiles into Israel inevitable and essential. These ideas have been proved to be false by now and Zionism has outlived its function, having established a Hebrew nation which must now look to and co-operate with the Arab nation and become a part of the Middle Eastern region. His specific proposals include the establishment of a Palestine Arab Republic (the Arab states he feels, would support such a solution if the Palestine Arabs themselves accept it and canvass support for it); the Palestine Arab state and Israel to be in Federal Union with Jerusalem as a Federal capital as well as a capital of both states; economic union; *the two states not to enter into any foreign alliance without the agreement of the other.*

These ideas may sound like a cry in the wilderness today; so did the ideas of Theodore Herzl of Zionism in the 19th century! Avnery's book is a significant contribution to the understanding of the Arab-Israel conflict and should be compulsory reading for Arab-haters and Jew-baiters, for Jews and Moslems, for Christians and Humanists, for Americans and Russians, for Zionists and anti-Zionists, for Arabs and Israelis, and for everyone who wishes to work for peace based on justice and humanity.

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## FILM REVIEW

LIZA VERITY

FACES: Academy One, Oxford Street, London.

*Faces*, John Cassavetes new film, is now showing at Academy One eight years after *Shadows*. The two films have some similarities but in *Faces*, Cassavetes is dealing with an older generation and with more experienced actors. The pattern of events is not particularly original, the film's success lying in its perceptive portrayal of the American bourgeois way of life. The story is a usual stock situation—the middle-aged man, tiring of his wife, tries to find happiness with a beautiful young girl. Consequently his wife chases after a boy half her age. The situation ends in near tragedy when she tries to kill herself. Her husband returns and the film ends in atmosphere of lassitude and drabness.

Cassavetes portrays with almost Shakespearian pathos the attempts of the ageing American to grasp at youth and the total inability of any of the characters to communicate with each other. They are the victims of an affluent society whose only salvation is a cocktail shaker. With a clever use of photography, Cassavetes manages to emphasise even more the generation gap and, of course, being in black and white the dramatic content is heightened. Perhaps the only poor scenes are the rather self-conscious improvisations creating a rather unnatural atmosphere. Otherwise, as opposed to *The Graduate* which perhaps has a similar 'message' to convey, *Faces* is far superior. *The Graduate* is merely a sick film—*Faces* is more of a documentary about a sick society.

## LETTERS

### Dons and Students

IN REPLY to Michael Cregan, I think it would be better if universities confined themselves to their original function of providing a place where a life of scholarship can be pursued. Those students who want education as an aid to a career in industry or the professions should attend specialised colleges where they should pay for their education, with the aid of loans if necessary. Let us not forget that the fees of university students are now paid by millions of taxpayers who do not send their children there. It seems hardly fair to tax these people in order to provide university students with better paid jobs.

Cregan's account of his expulsion is sad but understandable. Under a system of competing colleges, he would be able to select a place where he approved of the teaching. And in any case, I think that the young man intending to make a career in industry would do better to join a firm when he is young, rather than spend time in passing examinations. Industry is now so specialised that each firm has its own needs. The boy who wants to succeed will be able to get in libraries all the knowledge he wants. An employer who looks for examination degrees from an applicant will never succeed as well as the man who recognises guts and willingness when he sees them.

HENRY MEULEN.

### J. M. Robertson

MAY I as one who has devoted the major part of his life to the study of the late John M. Robertson's works express my appreciation for Mr Martin Page's excellent tribute to this titanic intellect which appeared in the FREETHINKER (September 28).

That Mr Page has rendered a signal service not alone to Free-thought but also to scholarship is patent; but, alas, likewise patent is the fact that the achievements of this encyclopedic mind have quickly fallen into a state of near oblivion. Aside from my friend, the late Professor Homer W. Smith who also admired JMR and bestowed a worthy tribute to him in his magnificent work, *Man and his Gods*, I don't know of any signs both here and abroad of homage to Robertson's works.

Freethought has had and undoubtedly still has many a man of intellect and scholarship, but, in my humble opinion few, if any, can match JMR's contributions.

I trust that we shall see more material from Mr Page's pen in regard to reviving an interest in the rare scholarship possessed by one of the greatest minds that has graced our Freethought movement.

In my rather comprehensive library I believe I have the most extensive collection of Robertsonia extant in the United States and the correspondence I was honoured to have with him is a treasured item in my files.

JACK BENJAMIN.

### Old hat to some . . .

I AM much pleased with recent issues of the FREETHINKER, but may I urge upon you the need to revive the paper's antitheistic fundamentalism of yesteryear. You remember, the time when a number of readers often complained that the FREETHINKER did nothing but preach to the converted. When of course (as any educationalist will tell you) it was doing no such thing—albeit something it hasn't ceased to do in more recent years.

I have previously echoed in another letter that "In every generation the work of re-education must begin anew", just let me further add (and in another respect, Gerald Samuel please note) that demolition must not only be done, but must also be seen to be done.

BRIAN KHAN.

### Worse and worse ?

IN WHAT claims to be a pro-Socialist and pro-Marxist article, "The Materialist Conception of History" (FREETHINKER, November 9) R. Stuart Montague talks about the "great bourgeois revolutions" of Russia (1917) and China (1927). Why not add "Indonesia" (1965)? After this somewhat curious start we read that if Lenin and Mao Tse-tung had been good Marxists they would have realised the error of their ways and surrendered to their political opponents. The moral is, presumably, that good Marxists stay at home having the correct ideas, and on no account pollute themselves by taking part in politics.

Now this in itself, provided it is recognised as just another piece of conservative propaganda and not taken seriously, is harmless enough. But then we have, ". . . the present period of world anarchy, chaos, crisis and conflict . . . the great men of this historical period are notably absent . . .". Or to put it bluntly, fings aint what they used to be, and the world is going to the dogs. Honestly, can't we leave this sort of rubbish to the Jehovah's witnesses and other religious extremists who thrive on it? The notion that the world is getting worse and worse is not only demonstrably false, it is also very useful to the enemies of free-thought, and not at all useful to us.

CONNAIRE KENSIT.

### A curious incident

THE PEOPLE for September 27, 1968, published an article headed: "We repeat: How much longer must this go on?" In it they wrote: "The strip-clubs flourish . . . the lurid bookshops thrive . . . calls girls multiply: a smear on the very heart of London".

I thought that this article would result in drastic police action to close the pornographic bookshops, whose conspicuous lighted signs, "Books and Magazines", are common in Soho, and who carry on their business quite openly, though limiting their customers to adults.

A day or two after the article appeared I was told that all the pornographic material had been removed from all the guarded back rooms of these shops, and a visit to a nearby shop seemed to confirm this. About a fortnight later I visited the same shop and found that the pornographic material was back again.

Is this apparent permissiveness of the authorities due to their acceptance of the consensus of opinion of psychologists and psychiatrists that such shops, despite the costliness of their wares, do more good than harm? Or is there some other reason?

G. F. WESTCOTT.

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